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COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND COORDINATION
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Agenda item 3

DRAFT REPORT

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: UNITED NATIONS REFORM:
MEASURES AND PROPOSALS (item 2 (b))

Section 27. Administrative services

1. At its 34th meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee considered section 27, Administrative services of the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations reform: measures and proposals (A/52/303). It had before it the proposals in respect of subsections 27A, Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management, 27C, Office of Human Resources Management and 27D, Support services.

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced section 27 and indicated that in line with the Secretary-General's proposed reorientation and transformation of the management of the United Nations, two types of changes were reflected: (a) the transfer of Conference Services and part of the Executive Office of the Department relating to Conference Services to section 1B (General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services); and (b) the recasting of the Department of Administration and Management as a Department of Management.

3. The representative of the Secretary-General further indicated that the emphasis of the Department of Management would shift to one of determining management policies to be followed by managers, the provision of management guidance to them and oversight of the effectiveness of managerial activities throughout the Secretariat. In this context, administrative functions would be delegated to and carried out where operations take place to a substantially greater degree than heretofore, leaving central management to concentrate on

policy development, guidance and monitoring of compliance. He indicated that in support of the devolution of responsibility to the most effective managerial level, in some carefully defined areas, consolidation provided considerable cost saving and other administrative benefits and could also result in more effective services, including those provided through the establishment of a common services facility, an area in which work was already proceeding.

Discussion

4. One delegation expressed general support for devolving responsibility to programme managers, where operations took place. As to the renaming of the Department, clarification was sought as to the necessity for the renaming from the Department of Administration and Management to the Department of Management when a substantial part of section 27 remained common support services thereby reflecting administration not management. The representative of the Secretary-General responded by indicating that as the core functions of the Department were predominately in the areas of advice, guidance and oversight. Hence, the name had been changed to reflect its primary management focus.

5. Another delegation noted the significant increase in the number of organizational units in subsection 27A, which added complexity to a previous simple structure.

6. One delegation noted that while resources had been identified for such expenditures as furniture and equipment, no clear indication had been provided as to the resources associated with the outsourcing referred to in the report. Another delegation sought clarification regarding the need to engage consultants for management reform as indicated in subsection 27A. In particular, the delegation queried the non-availability of such expertise internally and was advised by the representative of the Secretary-General that while there was certain expertise internally, it remained necessary for the Organization to draw on a wider range of expertise available outside the Organization in respect of specialized re-engineering tasks.

7. In connection with subsection 27C, one delegation sought clarification as to where the resources relating to the Secretary-General's proposals for the establishment of a task force to review human resources activities had been reflected in the report and was informed that the task force would be implemented within existing resources.

8. A number of delegations noted the lack of uniformity in the transfer of secretariats servicing Main Committees to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. In particular, that the secretariats servicing the Fifth and Sixth Committees had not been transferred to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, although others had and there thus appeared to be two levels of secretariats. In response it was indicated that the integration of technical and conference-servicing activities proposed for section 1B was limited for the time being pending experience being gained with that approach.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee took note of the information contained in subsections 27A, 27C and 27D of section 27, Administrative services, of the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations reform: measures and proposals.